

AL-19-000-8203



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR
REGION 5
77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD
CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

OCT 07 2019

The Honorable Rashida Tlaib
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Tlaib:

Thank you for your September 12, 2019 letter regarding air emissions from AK Steel Dearborn Works (AK Steel), in Dearborn, Michigan. I appreciate your concerns about public health in the communities surrounding the facility and hope you will find the information below helpful.

As mentioned in your letter, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (now Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy or EGLE) entered into a Consent Decree with the company on August 21, 2015 to resolve alleged Clean Air Act (CAA) violations at the AK Steel Dearborn facility. Paragraphs 19-21 of the Consent Decree impose specific obligations on AK Steel to ensure the Basic Oxygen Furnace (BOF) Electrostatic Precipitator (ESP) operates in compliance with the CAA. These include the requirement in Paragraph 20 that AK Steel submit quarterly reports to U.S. EPA that identify emissions from its BOF control equipment that exceed a 20% opacity limit. Importantly, each opacity exceedance requires that AK Steel evaluate and investigate the cause, describe corrective actions taken, and determine additional actions or measures to prevent such exceedances in the future.

U.S. EPA reviews AK Steel's quarterly reports submitted under the Consent Decree to determine whether the company has undertaken appropriate corrective actions for each opacity exceedance. Until receiving the first quarter 2019 report on April 30, 2019, U.S. EPA staff concluded that the company's proposed corrective actions would prevent additional opacity exceedances. In reviewing the first quarter 2019 report, however, U.S. EPA noted that the number of opacity exceedances surpassed previous quarters. After discussing this report with Michigan EGLE, both agencies concurred that more detailed information about the nature of AK Steel's exceedances and proposed preventative actions were needed.

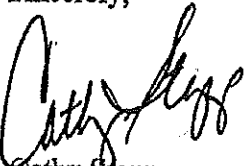
On June 27, 2019, U.S. EPA sent a letter to LaDale Combs, General Manager of AK Steel Dearborn Works, requiring that the company provide additional information necessary for U.S. EPA to adequately assess the opacity events and evaluate planned BOF ESP repairs.

On August 16, 2019, Mr. Combs responded, providing a summary of repair and maintenance work performed on the BOF ESP based on inspections required by the Consent Decree, ongoing BOF ESP maintenance work, and the expected scope of future work activities.

U.S. EPA recently completed its evaluation of the additional information provided by AK Steel. After consulting with EGLE on September 23, 2019, both agencies concurred that additional, detailed information from AK Steel is required in order to determine the best course of corrective action. On September 24, 2019, U.S. EPA sent AK Steel a letter requiring that they provide an engineering report and analysis of the deficiencies of the BOF ESP, the entire scope of work expected to be performed on the BOF ESP (including justification for prioritizing specific repairs on components of the BOF ESP), an explanation of the proposed timeframe for the repairs, the expected effects on opacity of each project, and any testing or criteria AK Steel will use to determine if a project has had the expected effect on opacity. U.S. EPA required AK Steel to submit this information no later than 30 days after receipt of the letter.

Again, thank you for your letter. U.S. EPA remains committed to its important mission of protecting public health and the environment. If you have further questions, please contact me, or your staff may contact Eileen Deamer or Ronna Beckmann, the Region 5 Congressional Liaisons, at (312) 886-3000.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cathy Stepp", written in a cursive style.

Cathy Stepp
Regional Administrator